and debt restructuring of outstanding loans for farmers in distress and in arrears. States and Union Territories are advised from time to time for effective implementation of the schemes for development of agriculture.

Congress of farmers

1953. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has organized Congress of farmers for the benefit of farmers;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the farmers benefited by such schemes, especially in Andhra Pradesh; and

(d) if not, by when such Congress would be held at the National or State levels?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) to (d) Department of Agriculture and Cooperation (DAC) has not organized Congress of farmers at National Level and there is no such proposal at present. However, the States/UTs can organize such Congress of farmers for facilitating farmer to farmer learning, interaction, technology transfer and for training of farmers under existing schemes. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has conducted Rythu Sedassu (Farmers' Meet) at each Revenue divisional Head Quarters during 2006-07 and 2007-08 in all 79 Revenue Divisions. Large numbers of farmers have participated from different villages for one day Rythu Sadassu (Farmers' Meet) organized for interaction and transfer of technology besides exhibiting of live demonstration. 3.16 lakh farmers during 2006-07 and 4.06 lakh farmers during 2007-08 have been benefited by such schemes in Andhra Pradesh.

Price hike of onion

1954. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that prices of onion is rising very frequently;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what is the reaction of Government; and

(d) what are the steps Government is taking in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) and (b)Price of onion is subject to seasonal fluctuations. The prices of onion, measured in terms of Wholesale Price Index (WPI), which declined from 167.1 in 2005 to 137.3 in 2006 (by 17.8 per cent) has increased to 243.5 in 2007 (January to November). On month-to-month basis in 2007 the WPI for onion declined for 245.8 in February to 165.3 in May 2007. An upsurge in prices from June 2007 continued up to October 2007 which has been followed again by a phase of decline in prices in November 2007.

(c) and (d) Government has been monitoring the movement in prices of onion with the objective to protect the interest of both the growers and the consumers of onion in the country.

To contain the abnormal hike in consumer prices of onion, the Government took the measures like supplying onion through Kendriya Bhandars, retail outlets of the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation Ltd., (NAFED) and the restriction